

Architects: Office envisioned as a new hub on northern bank of Tempe Town Lake



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An artist's rendering shows the public outdoor space and ground level retail of the Watermark in Tempe.

Provided by Cushman & Wakefield



By [Corina Vanek](#) – Reporter, Phoenix Business Journal
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Designing one of the first major office buildings on the north shore of Tempe Town Lake aimed to create a public and private hub of energy that previously had been focused on the southern bank, near Arizona State University.

“We had been working with Fenix Development for a long time on this site,” said Jeff Brand, director at Nelsen Partners, the architect of the project. “When they approached us about creating a mixed-use design on the Tempe waterfront, we viewed this project as the new gateway to Tempe.”

The Watermark finished construction in late 2019, and has leased space to WeWork and Opendoor before the Covid-19 pandemic hit. The \$150 million project is a 16-story, 265,000-square-foot Class A office building with a parking garage and includes 44,000 square feet of restaurant and retail space.

“A big challenge with buildings like this is you can tell where the parking stops and the office begins,” Brand said. “We wanted to blur the line of what was office and what was parking.”

The parking garage is required to be screened, and there needed to be air flow in the garage. The building features a variety of metal patterns, including one that looks like fish scales, a folded diamond design and a vertical design with square metal panels, which “added life to the building,” Brand said.

The development's street level was meant to be a pedestrian-friendly area with amenities, including a water feature, for the community as well as tenants.

“We looked to references in Europe, corridors that cars can drive through but are more like plazas,” said Jim McRae, principal with Design Workshop. “The aesthetics are about pedestrians first and then cars.”

McRae worked as a landscape architect for Scottsdale Quarter, and said the Watermark drew similarities from the pedestrian experience there. The Watermark’s street space includes a drop-off area where people can get out of their cars to visit tenants in the building or walk along the lake, which leads to the public space in the development. The ground-level retail and restaurant tenants include Panini Kabob Grill, Obon + Sushi + Ramen, V’s Babershop and Dip Nail Bar.

“One of our big moves is the central square, which connects Paseo de Norte to the lake,” he said. “The public space should have a benefit to the community at large.”